



# Polish Profiles

## A memory of my friends

By: **Kaya Mirecka Ploss**, Ph.D., Executive Director  
Jan Karski Institute, Baltimore, MD

Those of us who lived under the Communist Regime in Poland, know how oppressive it was. Yet, at the same time, normal life was going on. No matter how it was, we all have fond memories of people, of precious moments.

Fate had it that I spent most of my life living abroad. The years I lived in Poland were from autumn 1957 to spring 1966. Just a mere eight and a half years. I don't remember that time with pleasure. I was twice arrested, once for a week, the other time for six weeks. Watching my dying father I cared for who was just released from Communist prison where he spent 11 years, from 1946 to 1957, was heartbreaking. It was for my father that I decided to return to Poland. Before that I lived and studied in England. After I buried my father in 1965 I did everything possible to leave Poland for good. And I did.

While I lived in England I studied Fashion Dress Designing at the Royal College of Art in London. I had no difficulty in getting a job in Poland. On the contrary, I was embraced and given free rein. With a team of talented young designers I established special shops all over Poland called MODA POLSKA. Those shops carried dresses only designed by the team and myself. One of the designers, Małgorzata Tyrmand, became my friend. It was rather happy in the first year in Poland and then it started.

I was regularly visited by an agent of the Secret Police asking for information about certain people that I knew in England. The problem was that the man who questioned me knew so much more about those people than I did. That didn't deter him. Finally maybe out of frustration, or to make me talk, I was arrested. But I really had nothing to say, and I was released after one week.

More than three years passed when the visit started again. This time with a vengeance and threats. Not so much against me, but my dying father. They asked not for information about people but wanted me, or rather demanded that I travel to Munich, where I would visit the Polish section of Radio Free Europe and declare that I had escaped from Poland and I was seeking political asylum. Then perhaps join Radio Free Europe, and start destroying it from the inside.

The weekly visits and the pressure on me took a toll. I couldn't sleep, felt utter despair, and suicide thoughts were constantly with me. Then one day my new friend Małgorzata invited me to her mother's home for dinner.

That evening I found out that there is another Poland, besides the Communist world with their ugly political jargon and threats. I stepped into a world of elegance, intellectual discussions about the latest published book or play, classical music and world affairs. The people that I met there had built another reality besides the one outside the windows. I met writers, known for their opposition to the Communist regime, actors and known painters. There I also met three women who became my friends. Two of them were less known because of their own accomplishments, but because of their fathers. One was Monika Żeromska, the daughter of the known writer Stefan Żeromski. The second Elżbieta Osterwianka, the daughter of Juliusz Ostrewa, a famous actor and founder of the "Reduta Theater." The third was Magdalena Samozwaniec. She was the daughter of Wojciech Kossak and granddaughter of Juliusz Kossak, both world renowned painters. All three were older than I was.

Magdalena Samozwaniec won her own place in the literary world of Poland. Her books were filled with satire about people around her. She spared nobody, including her family. She was not on speaking terms with her whole family, including her daughter. Magdalena was also the most colorful of the three.

The dinner that was served was rather sparse and modest, but the porcelain and silver it was served on was fit for a king. After dinner we always played cards. At one table Bridge was being played, at the other Canasta, where I was assigned. The trouble was that I had never played cards before. It was Monika Żeromska who taught me how to play that game. And it was Monika Żeromska who got me out of prison when I was arrested the second time. As the daughter of Stefan Żeromski who was once nominated to the Noble Prize for Literature, the Communists treated Monika with kid gloves. She also knew certain people in the Government.

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## Electoral Kol Basar

*Justyna Ball*

For some time now, I tried to avoid speaking up about the present government in Poland because often it triggers my migraine headache. Although I follow its moves, successes and missteps, the situation sometimes gets so absurd that it becomes entertaining. Like in the Warmia region some clever soul, placed "kapliczki" (little roadside shrines) on trees to prevent the local officials from cutting the trees down. Nobody dares to come close since it's a holy site. The officials explained that the reason for cutting the trees is the fact that too many people drive into them. Right... People also drive into buildings, trains and yes, other people! But this sums up the logic of some in power.

"Oni chcą cofnąć Polskę do tyłu" which translates to "They want to put Poland in reverse - backwards", Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński accused his opponents from the podium. Such silly slip-ups are a daily treat for the Kaczyński duo's enemies. Not because it would be rather difficult to reverse it forward, but because no one can move the country back faster than PiS (Law & Justice) did. No wonder why - more than ever - Poles await yet another October election.

Many are hoping that in less than three weeks, two years of arrogance, embarrassment, the country's isolation, and repeated attempts to divide the nation will come to the end. Poles will try one more time to get it right.

From the PiS point of view, the simplest way to convince the public to get reelected is to call every rich person a thief and declare all the poor as good, honest, and victims of the rich. It always works. PiS's "pitbull" Jacek Kurski, who once goofed up, accusing Donald Tusk's grandfather of joining Wehrmacht, is also famous for "the dumb people will buy everything" slogan.

I guess that the Polish electorate buys into those slogans and I hate to say it, but

unfortunately, Kurski is right.

The coalition with LPR (League of Polish Families) and Samoobrona as predicted, proved to be short lived and came to a nasty divorce with lots of accusations and name-calling. It provided some unforgettable moments like Roman Giertych's speech in the parliament when he clearly showed that Jacek Kurski was lying and accused PiS of stealing LPR's program. And he was applauded by many, even his old opponents from LiD (Leftists & Democrats) as well. They all agreed that he burned Kurski to ashes. Sex scandals of Samoobrona became everyday news, as did early morning arrests of ministers and their associates by CBA (Central Bureau of Anti-Corruption). If you think Jan Kowalski is safe, think again. Last year the Prime Minister gave his ok to CBA to look into personal info of 25 million taxpaying Poles.

What's interesting is that Minister of Interior Kaczmarek, head of largest insurance company Jaromir Netzel and chief of police, are PiS' own people. One of the richest men in Poland, Ryszard Krauze, was just cleared of all accusations and how is it that he has President Lech Kaczyński on speed dial? But before that, Minister of Justice Zbigniew Ziobro staged several conferences to promote himself to the country's Robin Hood status.

**A pocket digital tape recorder remains the most popular gadget among politicians.**

Some party shifting also took place; Antoni Mężdyło openly admitted that the reason behind his transfer to PO (Civic Platform) was the PiS' close relationship with Tadeusz Rydzyk and Radio Maryja. Mężdyło, a Catholic, simply could not stand it anymore.

Besides Mężdyło, Bogdan Borusiewicz was another old Solidarity member who followed. Ex-Prime Minister in the Kaczyński government. Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz is openly supporting Radek Sikorski (independent, now PO) and Jarosław Gowin (also independent but starting from PO as well.) Still, the Civic Platform lost Maciej Płażyński (original

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### Apologies for 2 mistakes in the September issue...

The last line in the page 1 article about Consul General Paulina Kapuścińska was printed... her new position of Consul General of the Polish People's Republic in Los Angeles...

The line should read.... Her new position of **Consul General of the Republic of Poland**

*The end of the Polish Profiles article about Jagiellonian University was not carried forward and several readers called asking for a printout of how the article ended.*

#### Illustrious students

Together with his new wife Ann, who was a cousin of his first wife, they established the very successful Jagiellonian dynasty... a dynasty that brought the most enlightened period in Poland's history.

As for the University, it became known all over Europe. By the year 1400, over 18,000 students were enrolled there. One of the students registered at the University was named Mikołaj Kopernik, later known to the world by his Latin name, Nikolas Copernicus. Another student who studied at the Jagiellonian University was Karol Wojtyła, who became known as Pope John Paul II. □

### Calendar of Events

**Oct 13 UNITY FEST - Verdugo Park in Glendale - 1621 Cana Blvd. - Krakusy will perform. Polish American Congress will be participating.**

**13 and 14, Sat and Sun - San Diego area - Polish Festival - St. Kolbe Maximillian Polish Church 1735 Grand Ave. - Pacific Grove. Information: (619) 249-9502.**

**14, Sun, 12:30 p.m. Children's Medical Care Foundation Fundraiser - A Day at the Races - Santa Anita Park. Contact Phil Brewster at 800-367-2347 or email: Philip.brewster@wachoviasec.com**

**14, Sun, 3:00 p.m. Film "Mazowsze" Clubhouse Three - Polish Club of Laguna Woods; info: Irena 949-206-9122**

**Nov 4 Sun, Noon Mass followed by a worldwide celebration of the Pope John Paul II Foundation will be held in the Our Lady of the Bright Mount Parish Hall. Dinner will be served at 1:30p.m. followed by "A Program of Memories of Karol Wojtyla and Pope John Paul II." For information and reservations, call (626) 281-4456, (818) 956-5865, (949) 859-5125, (714) 544-3329.**

**8 Thu 7:30 p.m. Polish Independence Day Concert organized by the Polish Consulate General of the Republic of Poland - Colburn School of Music**

**11, Sun, Polish Children's Rainbow Fund has its annual bazaar in Szarotka, 3400 West Adams Blvd., Los Angeles, CA, Information: Natalia Kaminska 626 282 4686.**

**11 Sun, Poland's Independence Day Celebration, John Paul II Polish Center in Yorba Linda.**

**18 Friends of John Paul II Foundation Annual Meeting, Our Lady of the Bright Mount Polish Parish, 3424 W. Adams Blvd. in Los Angeles Info: (626) 281-0516**

**24 9:30 a.m. - Polish Genealogical Society - CA Meeting, Info: (310) 378-0877**

**28 Luncheon - Polish Club of Laguna Woods info: Irena 949-206-9122.**

**Dec 2 Sun 11:00 a.m. - Polish Women's Alliance's Children Christmas Party - Encino Country Club**

**2 Sun, 2:00 p.m. - Polish American Congress Oplatek luncheon and Polonia Awards presentations - Our Lady of the Bright Mount Church Hall.**

**Please send information for the calendar to Bish Petryka - e-mail: zbykoopet@aol.com ★**

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